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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4049
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 9481
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 2972
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNS/COMSOPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 004805

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EAP, PM, AND EAP/MTS
USPACOM ALSO FOR FPA HUSO AND J5
SECDEF/OSD/ISA/AP (TOOLAN/BAILEY)
JOINT STAFF/J5 (WILKES/ROBINSON/CLEMMONS)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [MCAP](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILLEN SEES FIRST-HAND HOW THE
U.S. IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE ON JOLO

[11](#). (SBU) SUMMARY. On a November 11 trip to Jolo Island in the Sulu Archipelago, Political-Military Affairs Assistant Secretary Hillen witnessed the transformational programs

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underway with collaboration among the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines, and the Embassy. He opened a USAID-financed community center in Jolo City and inspected the construction site of a future USAID-financed community center and an Armed Forces of the Philippines/Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines Medical Civic Action Program in the former Abu Sayyaf Group stronghold of Indanan.

He toured the rejuvenated village of Panamao, which in February 2005 had been devastated by fighting between the Philippine military and Muslim separatists. Complementing the current Philippine military campaign to capture or kill the senior Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist leadership now on the run on Jolo, integrated and synchronized U.S. defense, diplomacy, and development efforts are helping the Philippine government isolate and defeat the terrorists and assist local populations. END SUMMARY.

[12](#). (SBU) PM Assistant Secretary Hillen's November 11 trip to Zamboanga City and Jolo Island in the southern Philippines provided an on-the-ground view of ongoing counterterrorism efforts. Deputy Chief of Mission Jones and Brigadier General Toolan, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for South and Southeast Asian Affairs,

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joined him along with poloff O'Friel. Rear Admiral Tracy, the PACOM J-5, attended the Zamboanga portion of the trip before his departure for Kuala Lumpur.

[13](#). (SBU) In Jolo City, A/S Hillen opened a USAID-financed community center, with remarks to a packed hall and onlookers in the center of Jolo City. He then traveled to the former Abu Sayyaf Group stronghold of Indanan to inspect the construction site of a future USAID-financed community center and an Armed Forces of the Philippines/Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF) Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP). He later toured the rejuvenated village of Panamao, which in February 2005 had

been devastated by fighting between the Philippine military and Muslim separatists. He witnessed how the USG's defense, diplomacy, and development efforts are integrated and synchronized to help the Philippine government track down the Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah leaders on Jolo island, as well as to attack the underlying factors that feed terrorism.

¶4. (SBU) Lieutenant General Eugenio Cedo, the Philippine commander of Western Mindanao Command, praised U.S. development and civic activities, saying that economic development was helping to prevent the lawlessness that leads to terrorism and commented that the people of Jolo were now seeing a positive difference in their lives. "They are more friendly to us; they don't want the ASG and are providing us information on the High Value Targets," he stated. Cedo noted that, although he had been apprehensive about dealing with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) following the 2005 clashes with the Misuari Breakaway Group, the attitude of the MNLF leaders on Jolo had now changed, and they were increasingly willing to cooperate with his forces.

¶5. (SBU) Indanan Mayor Felip Jainal was effusive in his thanks for U.S. help during the inspection of the site of the future community center, a multi-purpose building that would serve as a market, meeting place, and classroom. "We couldn't have done this with our own resources," he admitted. At the nearby MEDCAP, the first-ever in this part of the Indanan municipality, U.S. and Philippine soldiers and NGO representatives from the Philippine Red Cross and Save the Children worked side-by-side to treat over 600 patients of all ages. From the smiles, it was clear that the response was overwhelmingly positive.

¶6. (SBU) Panamao has become a showcase of U.S. efforts. Once war-torn, the village is now becoming a regional pole. The dynamic Mrs. Anang Abdurajak, the mayor's wife, has organized a cooperative to produce clothes with sewing

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machines donated by the United States, and has embraced USAID-donated computers and Internet linkup as a means to educate the young Muslim women in her community. Looking to generate further economic activity, the Abdurajaks have developed a sweat-equity proposal to turn an abandoned building into a market to serve the surrounding area. JSOTF-P has the proposal under consideration and will likely implement it by first quarter 2007. According to Mayor Abdurajak, the Mayor of Kalingalang Caluang in southeastern Jolo, an area of suspected terrorist activity, has already asked how his community, too, can benefit from U.S. assistance.

COMMENT

¶7. (SBU) The synergy between USAID and JSOTF-P efforts, coupled with robust public diplomacy and regular visits by the Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials, are beginning to tell in the campaign to capture or kill the terrorist leadership on Jolo. In this campaign, the population is the center of gravity, and the United States is helping to move the momentum solidly in the direction of the Philippine government. Successful bilateral efforts in the Philippines serve broader U.S. multilateral security interests by helping the GRP to cooperate more effectively with its neighbors not only on counterterrorism, but also on maritime security, counter-proliferation, disaster response, and other regional issues.

¶8. (SBU) Assistant Secretary Hillen has cleared this telegram.

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